



Flood Control District of Maricopa County

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Partnerships the key to restoring the Gila River

PHOENIX (Jan. 16, 2014) – In 1999, the vision of a restored Gila River that serves as a catalyst for economic development in the West Valley was born. After being put on hold due to the recession, that vision is now moving one step closer to becoming a reality.

Last week Maricopa County Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox, joined by her colleague Supervisor Clint Hickman, led a planning session to look at the next steps to implementing the El Rio Watercourse Master Plan, a blueprint of strategies for regional flood control, development, recreation and wildlife habitat preservation for a 17.5-mile stretch of the Gila River. The plan is a cooperative agreement between the cities of Avondale, Buckeye and Goodyear, the Flood Control District of Maricopa County, and the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation and Planning and Development departments.

"We started planning El Rio a decade ago, but when the economy went south it was put on hold," commented Supervisor Wilcox. "The exciting thing about El Rio is the buy-in from Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear and the County. We're still a group working together. We have the foundation and now we just have to get it off the ground."

El Rio's success lies in partnerships, both intergovernmental and public-private. With more than 40 key participants at the planning session—including Buckeye Mayor Jackie Meck and Goodyear Mayor Georgia Lord—there is strong support behind El Rio. Other participants included Arizona state senators Anna Tovar and Lynne Pancrazi, as well as representatives from the offices of U.S. congressmen Raul Grijalva and Paul Gosar, the cities of Avondale, Buckeye and Goodyear, Maricopa County, the Gila River Indian Community, Buckeye Water Conservation and Drainage District, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and non-profit agencies like the Audubon Society and Sonoran Institute.



District 5 Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox



Goodyear Mayor Georgia Lord

"It's so nice to see such a worthwhile project and all of the cities working together to complete it," said Mayor Lord. "I am delighted that we've come together again and everybody is on the same page."

El Rio is unique because it is a regional approach to multi-use floodplain management. Instead of local governments individually planning their section of a river, the El Rio planning process integrated the watercourse master plan with the planning efforts of adjacent cities and plans of land-owning

agencies, like Arizona Game and Fish Department. By unifying their land use and recreation plans, coordinated development

can occur, thus creating a cohesive amenity that brings value to the region, not just each individual city. Add to that some strong public-private partnerships and the end result is one that will provide flood protection, environmental sustainability, and economic growth for the benefit of future generations.

"El Rio gives us the opportunity to partner with not just local municipalities, but also the business community," noted Supervisor Hickman. "By forming public-private partnerships, we can maximize taxpayer dollars and provide greater benefit without excess spending. I hope El Rio can be used as a model for other communities, for other rivers that cut through the County."



Buckeye Mayor Jackie Meck

"I'm just tickled to death to see the three communities come together, in addition to the Flood Control District of Maricopa County, and Board of Supervisors supporting us," said Mayor Meck. "This is a great thing for the West Valley."



District 4 Supervisor Clint Hickman

Learn more about El Rio in the 'projects and structures' section of the District's website, fcd.maricopa.gov. Sign up to receive project updates via email at <http://eepurl.com/GCGCz>.

The Flood Control District of Maricopa County is tasked to provide regional flood hazard identification, regulation, remediation, and education to Maricopa County residents so that they can reduce their risk of injury, death, and property damage from flooding, while still enjoying the natural and beneficial values served by floodplains.

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